



U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Washington, DC 20515

TRAVEL GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS

MEMORANDUM TO ALL MEMBERS, OFFICERS, AND EMPLOYEES

From: Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Chairwoman 
Doc Hastings, Ranking Republican Member 

Date: February 20, 2007

The new travel rules that were passed at the beginning of the 110th Congress require the Committee to issue guidelines concerning the reasonableness of travel expenses and the types of information that must be submitted to the Committee in order to obtain prior approval of privately-sponsored, officially-connected travel.¹ The rules also direct the Committee to issue regulations describing when a two-night stay will be permitted in order for a Member, officer, or employee to participate in a one-day event sponsored by a private entity that retains or employs a lobbyist, and the circumstances under which a lobbyist is permitted to have *de minimis* involvement in planning, organizing, requesting, or arranging a trip.²

The Committee hereby issues guidelines and regulations concerning the new travel restrictions and requirements. In many significant areas, the regulations and guidelines set forth below are new restrictions and requirements that *supersede* the Committee's policies under the travel rules that existed in previous congresses, and *they take effect on March 1, 2007*.

Travel Guidelines and Regulations³

A. Connection between Trip and Official Duties

A Member, officer, or employee seeking approval for travel must demonstrate that the activities on the trip are related to the individual's official responsibilities or matters arising from his or her official duties. In evaluating a request for approval to

¹ House Rule 25, cl. 5(i).

² House Rule 25, cl. 5(b)(1)(C). For brevity's sake, references in the text to the term "lobbyist" also include agents of a foreign principal.

³ These provisions address both the acceptance of in-kind transportation, lodging, and meals as well as reimbursement of travel expenses.

travel at private expense, the Committee will evaluate the individual's responsibilities, and/or whether the purpose of the trip relates to matters within the general legislative or policy interests of the Congress. Travel will not be approved if it does not include sufficient officially-connected activities, or if it includes excessive amounts of unscheduled time or opportunities for recreational activities during the official itinerary, even if such activities are engaged in at personal expense.

B. Reasonableness of Travel Expenses

(1) *Transportation to the Event:* Members, officers, and employees may accept up to business-class transportation on commercial air carriers or trains to participate in Committee-approved, privately-sponsored travel. Other transportation (including first-class airfare or train fare, charter travel, or travel on private aircraft) may *only* be accepted if:

(a) it is demonstrated that the cost of such travel does not exceed the cost of available business-class transportation (or if the traveler uses the traveler's own frequent flyer or similar benefits to upgrade to first class);

(b) such travel is necessary to accommodate a disability or other special need as substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority;

(c) genuine security circumstances require such travel;

(d) the scheduled flight time, including stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours; or

(e) the Committee permits such travel based on *exceptional* circumstances.

(2) *Local Transportation:* Local area transportation expenses during a trip must be reasonable and unrelated to personal or recreational activities.

(3) Lodging:

(a) For travel to events arranged or organized *without regard* to congressional participation (for example, annual meetings of business or trade associations or other membership organizations), Members, officers, and employees may accept lodging accommodations at a pre-arranged location for event attendees commensurate with those customarily provided to or purchased by other event attendees. The quality or location of the accommodations may not be enhanced because of the official position of the Member, officer, or employee.

(b) For travel to events arranged or organized *specifically with regard* to congressional participation (for example, fact-finding trips, site visits, educational conferences, and other trips designed for congressional attendance), Members, officers, and employees may accept reasonable lodging expenses at an appropriate facility. Among the factors to be considered in judging the reasonableness of expenses for a lodging facility are the cost of the facility, the location of the facility and its proximity to

the site(s) being visited, the quality of its conference facilities, any security concerns, and whether the facility may accommodate the number of attendees at the event.

(4) *Food:*

(a) For travel to events arranged or organized *without regard* to congressional participation (for example, annual meetings of business or trade associations or other membership organizations), Members, officers, and employees may accept meals related to the event that are similar to those provided to or purchased by other event attendees.

(b) For privately-sponsored travel to events arranged or organized *specifically with regard* to congressional participation (for example, fact-finding trips, site visits, educational conferences, and other trips designed for congressional attendance), Members, officers, and employees may accept reasonable meal expenses at an appropriate facility. The factors to be considered in judging the reasonableness of a meal expense include the maximum *per diem* rates for meals for official Government travel published by the General Services Administration or, for international travel, the maximum *per diem* rate for meals published by the State Department.

(5) *Other Travel Expenses:* Members, officers, and employees may accept reasonable miscellaneous travel expenses, such as transportation to and from airports, security costs, interpreter fees, visa application fees, and similar expenses that are necessary for the officially-connected purpose of the trip.

C. Relationship Between an Event and the Officially-Connected Purpose of the Trip

The location of events arranged or organized *without regard* to congressional participation (for example, annual meetings of business or trade associations) is presumptively reasonable. The location of *other* events must be necessary to the purpose of the event, or if more than one possible location may be relevant to the event, then the location selected must be a reasonable one in relation to the alternatives. If there is no specific location necessary or relevant to the purpose of the event, the location selected must be a reasonable one in light of the nature of the event and its participants, and should not create the appearance that the Member, officer, or employee attending the event is using his or her public office for personal gain.

D. Direct and Immediate Relationship between Source of Funding and an Event

Expenses may only be accepted from an entity or entities that have a significant role in organizing and conducting a trip, and that also have a clear and defined organizational interest in the purpose of the trip or location being visited. Expenses may not be accepted from a source that has merely donated monetary or in-kind support to the trip but does not have a significant role in organizing and conducting the trip.

E. One-day Event Trips Sponsored by a Private Entity that Retains or Employs a Lobbyist

The Committee will authorize a Member, officer, or employee to accept a second night's lodging and meal expenses in order for the individual to participate in a one-day event when it determines that such expenses are necessary due to availability of transportation to or from the event, or in those circumstances when an additional night's stay is practically required in order to facilitate the individual's full participation in the event. The Member, officer, or employee seeking approval for a two-night stay *must request approval from the Committee*.

In determining whether to permit a second night's stay, the Committee will consider the following factors:

- (1) the availability of transportation to and from the location of the one-day event;
- (2) whether the trip is outside the continental United States or involves travel across two or more time zones;
- (3) whether the Member or staff person is participating in a full-day's worth of officially-connected activities (*e.g.*, is the individual giving a speech, taking part in fact-finding, observing presentations, or participating in a panel discussion); or
- (4) any other *exceptional* circumstances that are described in detail by the traveler.

F. *De Minimis* Lobbyist Involvement in Planning, Organizing, Requesting, or Arranging a Trip

Member and staff participation in officially-connected travel that is in any way planned, organized, requested, or arranged by a lobbyist is *prohibited*, except as provided below:

- (1) when the travel is sponsored by an institution of higher education within the meaning of section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965; or
- (2) when the travel is for a one-day event trip *and* the involvement of a lobbyist in planning, organizing, requesting, or arranging the trip is *de minimis*, meaning only negligible or otherwise inconsequential in terms of time and expense to the overall planning and purpose of the trip.

G. Information that must be Submitted to the Standards Committee for Purposes of Receiving Prior Approval of Privately-Sponsored Travel

A private sponsor offering officially-connected travel to a Member, officer, or employee must complete and sign a Private Sponsor Certification Form, and provide a copy of that form to the invitee(s). The sponsor should not submit that form directly to the Committee. Private sponsors are strongly urged to submit the form to the invitee(s) at least 30 days before the travel is scheduled to begin.

A Member, officer, or employee must submit to the Committee a completed and signed Privately Sponsored Travel Approval Form that attaches or includes the Private Sponsor Certification Form and, for staff travel, a copy of the Advance Authorization of Employee Travel Form.